

Final Report
FY 2018 Task 1.02
Virginia Coastal Zone Management Program –
Virginia Department of Environmental Quality

Virginia CZM Program Outreach & Social Marketing



*Young visitor to Virginia CZM Program exhibit learns about native plants and using a paper straw to help prevent marine litter.
By Virginia Witmer, Virginia CZM Program*

Report submitted by Virginia Witmer, Virginia CZM Program Outreach Coordinator



Virginia Coastal Zone
MANAGEMENT PROGRAM



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FY 2018 Task 1.02

Virginia Coastal Program Outreach and Social Marketing Final Report

October 2018 – December 31, 2020

The FY 18 Virginia CZM Program Outreach and Social Marketing grant supported the following products:

Social Marketing to Reduce Marine Debris ---

One of the near term actions identified in the Virginia Marine Debris Reduction Plan was design and implementation of a social marketing campaign targeting behaviors that will reduce balloon litter in the marine environment. Balloons were identified as one of the most harmful items to wildlife.

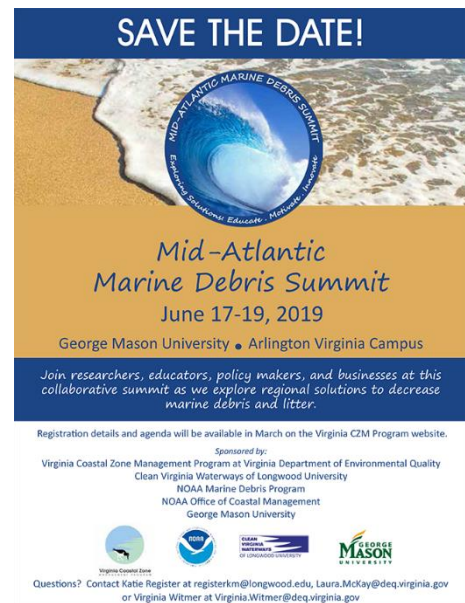
During the FY 18 Virginia CZM Program Outreach and Social Marketing grant, the Virginia CZM Outreach Coordinator served as a member of the Mid-Atlantic Regional Council on the Ocean's Mid-Atlantic Marine Debris Work Group. The former Mid-Atlantic Regional Planning Body, and Mid-Atlantic Regional Council on the Ocean (MARCO), agreed that the best course for a regional marine debris strategy was to expand the [*Joyful Send-off campaign*](#). Balloons had been highlighted in an *Assessment of Marine Debris in the Mid-Atlantic* as a cause for concern. In addition, during a June 2017 workshop, Mid-Atlantic marine debris experts were asked to consider which common marine debris item A) posed the greatest risk to marine wildlife and habitats, B) was the most politically and economically feasible to address, and C) could be addressed using a single strategy across the whole Mid-Atlantic. These experts identified balloons as a priority target and agreed that Community Based Social Marketing was the best approach to help change behavior and prevent this harmful form of marine debris.

In December 2017, MARCO successfully applied for a FY18 NOAA Marine Debris Prevention Grant (\$145,607) to enable broad-scale implementation of the *Joyful Send-off* campaign in the other four mid-Atlantic states - Maryland, New York, New Jersey and Delaware. In 2018 - 2019, MARCO's Mid-Atlantic Marine Debris Work Group received Master Coaching from Doug McKenzie-Mohr to help guide the expansion of the campaign (funded by Virginia CZM through FY 17 Task 94.03). McKenzie-Mohr, suggested the Mid-Atlantic campaign focus on a broader public audience and use of CBSM social diffusion/normative tools. The Virginia CZM Outreach Coordinator had a leading role in preparing for and conducting these coaching calls, as well as working with OpinionWorks and collaborating with Mid-Atlantic campaign partners, to develop and conduct additional research needed to inform the CBSM campaign strategy to ensure that it will be effective in reducing balloon releases and debris in the Mid-

Atlantic region. The Work Group plan is to implement a campaign that will be scalable beyond the target communities and transferable to other regions of the United States.

Specifically, the FY18 NOAA CZM grant enabled the Outreach Coordinator to work with partners to produce or assist in producing the following marine debris reduction products:

- **Mid-Atlantic Marine Debris Summit:**
Provided pre-event and on-site logistical support for June 2019 Mid-Atlantic Marine Debris Summit, including event registration, communications with registrants and agenda updates via Constant Contact and VA CZM Summit webpage. Presented at the summit on development of Mid-Atlantic balloon reduction campaign strategy and possible CBSM social normative techniques to be applied.
- In April 2019, Chesapeake Bay Magazine feature article highlighted Virginia CZM balloon debris monitoring and reduction projects - <https://bit.ly/2WvrmBb>. Coordinator responded to questions from the reporter and provided background materials on Virginia CZM marine debris leadership and projects.
- **Prevent Balloon Litter Website:**
Served as primary administrator of www.PreventBalloonLitter.org website. A March 2019 editorial in a Michigan newspaper endorsed PreventBalloonLitter.org, which was established by Virginia CZM and Clean Virginia Waterways - <https://bit.ly/2BQq75V>.



Social Marketing to Increase Native Plant Use ---

The Outreach Coordinator continued to co-chair and coordinate the activities of the Virginia Native Plants Marketing Partnership, working with members to implement an Action Plan, which describes the activities that partners are collectively taking, or can take, to leverage resources and the diversity of our partnership to advance the mission of the partnership (www.plantvirginianatives.org/virginia-native-plant-marketing-partnership-action-plan/). The mission is *to identify and prioritize opportunities to collaborate on Virginia native plant communication and marketing efforts and form cohesive and coordinated messaging and strategies to increase local availability and use of native plants state-wide for their many ecological benefits.*

Below are highlights of this work, which raised visibility of Virginia CZM and the program's native plant marketing efforts:

- In July 2019, the Garden Club of Virginia adopted a resolution to launch a Pollinator Protection Initiative, which mobilizes its members to plant Virginia natives, encouraging them to consult PlantVirginiaNatives.org for regional native plant lists (including the conservation chairman at each of their 47 clubs).
- Partnered with Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries staff to present three regional native plant campaign workshops in July and August 2019, resulting in formation of one new campaign in the Southern Piedmont.
- Participated in Pollinator-Smart Virginia Solar Industry Stakeholder meetings, forming a new relationship with Ernst Seed and resulting in Andy Ernst participation on a native plant propagation and marketing panel at the 2019 VNLA Field Day.
- Virginia Native Plant Society executive board voted to focus its 2019-2020 special fundraiser to raise "seed money" for reprinting current regional native plant guides, and producing new guides. Appeal letter recognizes and praises Virginia CZM Program for funding and leadership on this issue. VNPS raised \$35,000.
- Communications with Virginia Dept of Environmental Quality stormwater staff resulted in additions to the to the agency's Erosion and Sediment Control Handbook to incorporate Virginia native species into planting recommendations and a link to PlantVirginiaNatives.org.
- Designed and submitted three ads for the 2019 Virginia Growers Guide, published by the Virginia Nursery and Landscape Association, highlighting the regional native plant campaigns and guides (premium location on back flap of guide), and half-page ads for The Flora of Virginia App and the critical need for native plants for habitat restoration – all ads provided CZM credit. (Ad fees paid with contractual funds remaining in FY17 Task 1.02.)



- Continued serving as main administrator of the website – <http://www.PlantVirginiaNatives.org> – home for the Virginia Native Plants Marketing Partnership, a central hub for Virginia native plant information and host to a sub-site for a growing number of regional campaigns - Plant Eastern Shore Natives, Plant Central Rapp Natives, Plant Southwest Virginia Natives, Plant Northern Piedmont Natives, and Plant Richmond Virginia (RVA) Natives. A native plant marketing issue page is still available on the Virginia CZM Program website, highlights the leadership of Virginia CZM and links to the new website. This website has had 18,000 visit and 35,000 page views during the first year of this grant – October 1 – September 30, 2019.
- Designed a pledge decal – *Plant Natives for Pollinators* (5,000 at \$1,995.00) distributed during a 2019 Virginia State Fair exhibit and through multiple regional native plant campaigns.
- Designed and staffed a new 2019 State Fair exhibit, including over a dozen new educational display panels, a new Plant Natives for Pollinators pledge decal and banner (over 535 signatures collected), and collaborated with Hanover Master Gardeners on a native plant garden display at the fairgrounds.
- Presentations given by coordinator related to the Plant Virginia Natives marketing initiative included:
 - Hometown Habitat film screening exhibit and remarks during RVA Environmental film festival (250 attendees; Feb 2019)
 - DEQ Talk webinar on native plant marketing (120 attendees; Oct 2018)
 - Webinar to state-wide Master Naturalists highlighting opportunities to participate in regional native plant marketing campaigns (50 participants; 12 MN chapters; Dec 2018); in response have received numerous requests for guidance on initiating regional campaigns in western areas of the state.



The Outreach Coordinator continued to work closely with the coordinators and steering teams of the current regional native plant campaigns to provide assistance where needed and to encourage communication and sharing of resources between the campaigns. An overview of the regional marketing efforts is available at <https://www.plantvirginianatives.org/virginia-regional-native-plant-campaigns/>.

Plant RVA Natives Campaign –

- Coordinated with partners in Virginia's Capital Region to plan and launch the Plant RVA Natives regional native plant marketing campaign on April 27, 2019 - <https://www.plantvirginianatives.org/plant-rva-natives>. The campaign has garnered thousands of pledges.



- As the current campaign coordinator, drafted the campaign strategy, based on findings of research conducted in other coastal regions and on the regional strategy model developed.
- Designed multi-media materials including plant tags, pledge decals, exhibits, and fact sheets. ADD IMAGES.
- Designed the Virginia Capital Region native plant guide, and coordinated printing and distribution to multiple partners (guide was printed with contractual funds remaining in FY16 Task 1.03, which leveraged \$7,000 in partner contributions to print 17,000 copies). Language from guide was used in captions for a Plants of the James River Project botanical print exhibit (displayed at multiple locations in Fall 2019).
- Produced joint DEQ/DCR press release to announce availability of the Virginia Capital Region native plant guide, which resulted in coverage, including: editorial in Richmond Times Dispatch (March 15, 2019) - <https://tinyurl.com/y39mmpu2>, letter to editor from president of Northern Neck Chapter, VNPS in support, and article in Augusta Free Press (March 17, 2019) - <https://tinyurl.com/yvrgue6j>.



- Social media response to the launch of the campaign was very encouraging with providers tweeting their support for the campaign. *For example, a spring 2019 tweet from Sneed's Nursery in Richmond read "So excited to support this initiative! We've got complementary guides to give to customers. Just ask an associate for one!" resulted in replies such as "What a perfect partnership Sneed's Nursery & Garden Center! Yay!"* A visit to Sneed's shortly after this exchange, showed that the center had of its volition posted a sign to inform customers that they no longer sell English Ivy because it is an invasive.
- In August 2019, the Coordinator appeared on a VPM (PBS) television program, Virginia Home Grown, to highlight availability of Native Plants for Virginia's Capital Region - <https://to.pbs.org/369ohet>. The Virginia CZM Program's role in launch of the Plant RVA Natives campaign was mentioned in April on the WCVE radio show, "What's Bugging You?," which airs during NPR's Morning Edition. Contacted by one of central Virginia's well-known TV meteorologists for guidance on removing turf at his home and replacing it with a "landscape full of native plants."
- Highlights of campaign-focused exhibits:
 - Garden Day at Executive Mansion (May 2019) resulted in over 150 signatures on the Plant RVA Natives pledge banner, including that of First Lady Pamela Northam.
 - Collaboration with James River Association and City of Richmond to develop displays at three Richmond Libraries to highlight actions citizens can take to protect water quality and increase native habitat (month long in October).
 - Rockwood Backyard Beekeepers 10th Annual Honey Bee Festival (June 2019; over 3,000 public attendees)
 - Lewis Ginter Fall PlantFest, collaborating with Hanover Master Gardeners (Sept 2019; about 70 pledges collected)



Plant NOVA Natives Campaign –

- During the 2019 Plant NOVA Natives campaign annual partners meeting, Virginia CZM was recognized for its role in continued partnership with, and funding of, the campaign,

and credited with helping make the campaign a widely recognized, award-winning success.

- Coordinated a reprint of “Native Plants for Northern Virginia” guide – the 4th printing, funded entirely through sales of guides.

Plant Central Rapp Natives Campaign –

- As a member of and advisor to the *Plant Central Rappahannock Natives* Campaign steering team, worked with partners on installation of native plant demo landscaping in King George County – specifically, designed and coordinated production of 6 interpretive signs and plant ID markers for the site.
- Assisted with media outreach, including drafting a press release with the George Washington Regional Commission that resulted in coverage including a front page story in the Free Lance-Star - <https://bit.ly/2NiXovU>, and article in The Front Porch Magazine <https://issuu.com/frontporchfredericksburg/docs/fpfmay2021> (page 10), and an article in the Soil and Water Conservation District newsletter at <https://bit.ly/34jYqy>



General Virginia CZM Program Outreach ---

The FY18 NOAA CZM grant enabled the Outreach Coordinator to engage with partners in the following activities, and produce or assist in producing the following products:

Virginia Coastal Zone Management Magazine:
Produced, working with Virginia CZM staff, the Fall 2019/Winter 2020 issue of *Virginia Coastal Zone Management Magazine* (published in January 2020; contractual funds remaining in FY17 Task 1.02 used for printing)

Downloadable from:

<https://www.deq.virginia.gov/coasts/publications-resources>



Also viewable from:

https://issuu.com/vacoastalzonemanagementprogram/docs/fall_2019-winter_2020_virginia_coastal_zone_manage

2018 Virginia Coastal Partners Workshop:

Worked with Virginia CZM staff on logistics, including publicity and registration. Organized and facilitated native plant session.

Virginia CZM Program website:

Continued as primary administrator of the program's website. Worked with Virginia CZM staff to add and maintain content, and downloadable documents were ADA compliant. Focus in 2018-2019 was on working with Virginia CZM staff to outline a plan to overhaul and improve navigation of website, including addition of new issue pages and content updates of existing pages.

Signage:

Finalized interpretive 3-panel kiosk artwork for towns of Onancock and Saxis, with review from CZM Manager, AN-PDC and town staff.

Memberships and committee roles:

Included membership on the Virginia Resource-Use Education Council, and serving as a grant reviewer for the Chesapeake Bay Trust.



2019 Marsh Resilience Summit:

Provided publicity and registration support for the Summit.